United Nations A/61/PV.74

General Assembly
Sixty-first session

Official Records

74th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 12 December 2006, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda items 9 and 111 (*continued*)

Report of the Security Council (A/61/2)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Mr. Abani (Niger) (*spoke in French*): It is a very great honour for me to speak on behalf of the Group of African States concerning the agenda items being considered in this debate. In that regard, I should like to congratulate Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of Qatar, for presenting the report of the Security Council (A/61/2). The African Group would also like to thank the Open-ended Working Group for its report on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters (A/60/47).

We recognize that a significant part of the Council's work concerns Africa, the continent predisposed to conflict, and we commend the members of that body for their remarkable work. However, the belated publication of these reports has not permitted us to consider it in detail. Therefore, my comments can be of only a general nature. The African Group reserves the right to make its views wi ely known at the appropriate time on this issue, one that is important for the only region not to have a permanent Council member.

Through the 2005 World Summit Outcome document (resolution 60/1), our heads of State and Government undertook a firm commitment to work to strengthen the United Nations, in particular with a view to reforming its principal organ entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security: the Security Council. For the African Group, Council reform is a major issue requiring much commitment on the part of everyone in order to make progress and adapt our Organization in the process of the reforms that we have begun.

The African Group would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its position on this issue. That position was expressed in the Ezulwini Consensus and confirmed in the Syrte Declaration and is based on the following principles. First, reform must be an integral part of the comprehensive reform process under way in the United Nations. Secondly, these reforms, if they are to be effective, must put an end to the historic wrong done to certain regions. They must move towards greater legitimacy by necessarily increasing the membership in both categories, as well as by improving its methods of work. This would mean greater transparency, which could only serve the cause of maintaining of international peace and security.

Lastly, for us, the selection of African representatives must also be carried out in accordance with the criteria that the African Union itself will define. The African Group, while remaining open to constructive dialogue with all interested structures, reaffirms that Security Council reform must be carried

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out in a democratic manner, so that it can take into account the aspirations of each and every one of us.

On that basis, the African Group wishes to see that this historical imbalance, whereby Africa is the only continent that is not represented in the Security Council, be rectified. That is why the Ezulwini Consensus, which represents the joint African position, consists of two permanent seats with all the prerogatives related thereto, including the right of veto; and five non-permanent seats, which implies two additional seats in relation to the current situation.

It is this position, which was transmitted to the Assembly in draft resolution A/60/L.41, that the African Group believes would reflect democracy and take into account the current trend in the world.

Mr. Hamidon (Malaysia): My delegation is pleased to participate in this joint debate on agenda items 9 and 111. We join others in thanking Ambassador Nassir Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar and President of the Security Council for the month of December, for his presentation of the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, as contained in document A/61/2.

Malaysia aligns itself with the statement made by Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). We would also like to congratulate the newly elected members of the Council for 2007 and 2008 — Belgium, Indonesia, Italy, Panama and South Africa. We hope that they will bring fresh impetus to the work of the Council.

We consider this annual report by the Security Council to the General Assembly to be important. It not only fulfils the relevant requirements of the Charter but, more importantly, fulfils the Council's obligation to the larger membership represented in the Assembly. The report enables the entire membership of the United Nations to follow the Council's work. The Assembly's consideration of the report will hopefully provide useful feedback to the Council on its performance.

The Security Council's annual report is an important element in the Charter relationship between these two major organs. Articles 15 and 24 of the Charter require that the Council submit annual and, when necessary, special reports to the Assembly for its consideration. This clearly points to the need for the Council to be accountable to the larger membership. In this connection, the General Assembly should have the opportunity to assess and judge the performance of the Council over the past year. In turn, Council members should have the opportunity to pay careful attention to the concerns, observations and comments of the larger membership.

My delegation hopes that the comments and suggestions made in the General Assembly will receive appropriate consideration by Council members in the discharge of their responsibilities on behalf of all of us in the maintenance of international peace and security. For the larger membership to be able to provide its comments, Member States need time to prepare for this debate. We regret that the report was approved by the Council only last Wednesday and was subsequently published as an official document late last week, thus giving Member States very little time to study it and provide comprehensive comments. We regret that this has happened again, this year. We urge the Council to provide the report much earlier in the future.

We note the improvement in the Council's methods of work. However, the report continues to lack a substantive and analytical account of the Council's work. The incorporation of more details and analyses, beyond a factual account of the work, could certainly help the wider membership of the United Nations to appreciate the circumstances that influenced the Council's decisions on a particular issue. This would enable a greater appreciation of the achievements made or difficulties faced by the Council on questions under its consideration. It would allow non-Council members to offer suggestions on possible measures to further improve the Council's work.

My delegation notes that the Council addressed a wide range of issues during the period under review and that its workload has continued to increase steadily. A total of 250 meetings were held, 81 resolutions adopted and 65 presidential statements issued. Conflict and instability in Africa continue to dominate the work of the Council.

The holding of thematic debates is useful in improving the effectiveness of the Council. The exchange of views between non-Council and Council members in these thematic debates on issues relating to international peace and security allows for the development of appropriate strategies that are more holistic and integrated, involving all the major organs of the United Nations. Nevertheless, such an exercise

as carried out by the Security Council should not venture into areas that rightly fall under the responsibility of the other major organs of the United Nations. Given the Council's increasing workload, it might be helpful if thematic debates are kept to a minimum in any particular year. They should not be held just for the sake of having discussions, but rather with a view to achieving concrete results. That would have an impact on the performance not only of the Council but also on the United Nations at large.

My delegation welcomes the Council's continued consideration of the questions of Palestine and the Middle East through its monthly briefings and open debates. However, they have not had a significant impact on the situation on the ground. Violence continues unabated, while death and destruction continue to mount, particularly on the Palestinian side. We wonder why this is happening, even when the Council is continuously seized of the matter. The Council must maintain and improve its credibility by enforcing its authority on these questions. It must discharge its responsibilities in the maintenance of peace and security. It must resist any party's manipulating the Council and preventing it from taking action that would end conflict, restore peace and security and prevent further loss of life.

Turning to agenda item 111, my delegation wishes to state that we agree with the prevailing view that the Security Council needs to be reformed in a comprehensive manner, in terms of both its working methods and the expansion of its membership, to make it more legitimate, inclusive, representative and transparent. The position of Member States on this issue is well known to all. However, we are dismayed by the lack of political will and the selectivity shown in addressing various aspects of the reform. There appears to be a push in some areas and disinterest in others, particularly that concerning the Security Council.

My delegation wishes to reiterate its position that reform should also address the question of the veto, with a view to eventually doing away with it, in conformity with the principle of sovereign equality, as envisaged in the Charter. The veto privilege remains the chief cause for the undermined credibility of the United Nations and its ability to function as a democratic institution. If one values the rule of law over traditional power and politics, then genuine democratic principles must prevail.

Many proposals and formulations have been put forth to address the use of the veto. Malaysia continues to hold the position that the exercise of the veto by the permanent members of the Security Council should be regulated so as to prevent abuse by its holders to unjustly overrule the wishes of the majority. Malaysia has previously suggested that until this objective of abolishing the veto is achieved, a modified veto, whereby two permanent members with veto power, backed by three other members of the Council, would be needed to block any Council resolution.

Another important element that needs to be urgently addressed in improving the working methods of the Security Council is the issue of encroachment on the work of the General Assembly. We have seen over the years that the Council addresses issues that do not fall under its purview. Rather than encroaching upon the jurisdiction of the General Assembly, it would be better if the Security Council looked at ways to ensure that the views of the larger membership are taken into account in its drafting and decision-making processes.

With regard to the question of the enlargement of the Security Council, Malaysia fully supports expansion in both categories, based on geographical balance and reflecting the geopolitics of today. We reiterate our position that if there is no agreement on expansion in the permanent membership, we should proceed on expansion in the non-permanent category, while keeping the issue of expansion of the permanent membership active.

My delegation feels that it is time for us to move forward and for Member States to demonstrate their political will in reforming the Security Council. Any reform is for the betterment of the Organization and should not be seen as taking the side of any one or more groups.

Before I conclude, allow me to express our continued support to the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council. My delegation believes that discussion on Security Council reform should continue through this Working Group.

Madam President, Malaysia will continue to support and work closely with you, with other States Members and with the Secretary-General to explore new ideas with a view to reforming the Security Council.

Mr. Yousfi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): My delegation associates itself with the statements made by Niger on behalf of the African Group and by Cuba on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Algeria finds it wise to hold this joint debate because the two questions under discussion are very closely connected. In fact, the practice of the Council — which unfortunately is not reflected or is insufficiently reflected in its reports to the General Assembly — represents an important parameter for evaluating the nature and the depth of the reform that we would like to see in the functioning of this body, which is strategic for the work of the Organization.

The shortcomings that hinder the way the Council carries out its mandate, which were highlighted during the annual debate on its report, show very clearly that it might be an illusion to believe that a substantial change can be made in its practice, given its current membership and its working and decision-making procedures. Seen from this perspective, the report of the Council to the Assembly represents proof of the Council's inability to evolve in the direction that the majority of Member States would like.

In other words, like previous reports, the one submitted to us today bears the signs of the same problems that we have consistently deplored. Cuba, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, has presented a long list of these problems. Indeed, both in terms of its form and its content, the report does not enable the General Assembly to carry out a serious and complete analysis of the Council's work during the period in question. The trend to reduce this discussion to a mere ritual is confirmed year after year. In every case, the report is far from meeting the political and legal requirements stemming from the accountability obligation that is incumbent on the Security Council, in accordance with the relevant articles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The ambiguities that characterize relations between the Council and the General Assembly are not the issue here. Clearly there is a desire to prevent the Assembly from exercising its right to examine the functioning of the Council, which is provided under the Charter. Moreover, Member States that criticize the Council's work cannot be reproached for a lack of proposals to remedy certain shortcomings. It is a fact that the majority of the innovations made in the working procedures of the Council, reflected in greater accessibility for non-member countries and an improvement in the transparency of the work, were promoted by the General Assembly Working Group on the reform of the Council.

Moreover, thanks to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 51/241, the summaries of the discussions on these items by the Presidents of the General Assembly contain very relevant proposals. It must be admitted that we are facing resistance on the part of permanent members, in particular against putting into effect these numerous proposals, including the updating and definitive adoption of the rules of procedure of the Council and limiting the use of the veto only to questions that represent a real threat to peace and therefore come under Chapter VII of the Charter.

In this context, I would like to make a few comments that I think could help to curb the Council's propensity to infringe particularly on the competence of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and to refocus its work on the mandate of the with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

In this respect, it would be appropriate for the members of the Council — and this remark is also addressed to non-permanent members — to resist every attempt to confer upon the Council a standard-setting role, whether of a political or a legal nature. The Security Council has as its mission to act in the case of a threat to or breach of peace and international security.

At issue in particular are the thematic debates, which for no purpose infringe on the competence of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, whereas their contribution to the work of the Security Council and to the Organization as a whole is far from having been proven. Moreover, these discussions are seen by a large majority of Members as reflecting the wish to marginalize the General Assembly. They are also a source of tension in relations between the two bodies. That is why Algeria refused to organize a debate of that type during its term as President of the Security Council.

It is important for the Security Council to take into account and to adapt to the new institutional landscape of the Organization, which is reflected, in particular, by the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. The

Security Council can no longer rely on the alibi of human rights violations to take up consideration of a situation in which there is clearly no proven threat to international peace and security. Similarly, the Peacebuilding Commission must serve as a forum for greater synergy of efforts for the international community to ensure proper support for post-conflict countries and to help to establish lasting peace and stability. The role of the Security Council is to make certain that the transition to the peacebuilding phase is carried out in the best possible conditions.

Members of the United Nations have assigned to the Security Council primary responsibility, once again, for the maintenance of international peace and security. This delegation of responsibility, which deals with an area as sensitive as questions of peace and security, implies that the Council must respect the wishes of those who have given it this mandate, especially, when expressed by a large majority.

Such is the case with the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, in particular, where the General Assembly resolutions are systematically ignored by the Security Council. The use of the veto to prevent the Council from exercising its responsibility vis-à-vis the cause of the Palestinian people and the Arab-Israeli conflict represents a challenge to the wishes of the same community on whose behalf the Council is supposed to act. Moreover, the Council's inability to meet and to call for a ceasefire while Lebanon and its people were facing a very murderous war for an entire month represents a tendency that, unfortunately, has undermined its credibility.

One cannot stress enough the need for optimum use of the resources under Chapter VIII of the Charter and, subsequently, for cooperation with regional organizations. In this connection, we welcome the fact that this subject has an important place on the Council's agenda. Close cooperation between the African Union, its Peace and Security Council and its subregional organizations has made it possible to achieve progress in the settlement of certain conflicts in West Africa and in the Great Lakes region, in particular.

The strengthening and intensification of this coordination is more necessary than ever to cope with the crises in Darfur, Côte d'Ivoire and Somalia. Today, as seen through Security Council resolution 1706 (2006), on Darfur, one can measure the extent of damage when joint efforts are lacking. The United Nations could have made Darfur a model of successful cooperation and interaction with regional organizations.

I cannot conclude this subject without recalling the duty and responsibility of the Council to defend the principles of the Charter and international legality when they concern, in particular, the right of peoples to exercise their right to self-determination. This is the case of the people of Western Sahara, who are waiting for the Council to fulfil its commitments and promises by enabling them finally to exercise this right through a free and credible referendum.

Algeria has frequently stressed that Security Council reform cannot be reduced to a mere arithmetic operation of increasing the number of seats. It is our deep conviction that any plan to reform the Council should be evaluated in terms of its capacity to respond to the three requirements of democracy, representativeness and effectiveness. In other words, Council reform will not attain its objectives fully unless it contributes to real democratization of international relations, the rehabilitation of multilateral aid, the emergence of a world order based on law, and the establishment of a modern and effective collective security system that embodies the right of all to security and development.

To have some chance of enjoying the broadest possible support among Member States — a prerequisite for success — the long-awaited reform must meet two essential conditions, as we see it. First, it must respect the principle of the sovereign equality of States; then it must have as its goal the correction of imbalances by according a large place to developing countries. In particular, the injustice afflicting the African continent must absolutely be corrected by giving Africa in the expanded Council the representation commensurate with its weight, both in terms of permanent and non-permanent seats.

Clearly, however, no progress will be possible unless the will exists to modernize the working procedures of the Council, in particular the practice of the veto. The solution by which those aspiring to permanent seats would voluntarily renounce that privilege is, perhaps, attractive from the point of view of what we might call political realism, but it is inconceivable for at least two reasons. First, the veto

presents a problem, and the overwhelming majority of States believe it to be anachronistic and anti-democratic. And secondly, the creation of a third category of Council members without this veto privilege — apart from the fact that it is particularly questionable — has been rejected by the African Union, which again today has clearly and firmly asserted its right to two permanent seats with all of the privileges relating thereto.

Mr. Pak Gil Yon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): It is essential for the United Nations to ensure fairness in the activities of the Security Council in order to contribute to international peace and sec. 'y. One of the reasons that the Council is not playing the role greatly expected of it in efforts for international peace and security, in line with the United Nations Charter, is the lack of fairness in its activities.

Today, we are witnessing the fact that invasions of sovereign States are openly committed, patronized or tolerated, even though they result in the massacre of innocent people, while the efforts of Member States to defend their sovereignty are condemned as a threat to international peace and security. Naturally, all of these realities raise a major question as to whether the Security Council is capable of assessing who is doing the threatening and who is subjected to the threat.

The Security Council is handling many important issues, in accordance with the interests of certain specific countries; this has harmed the trust of Member States in the Council.

It is noteworthy how irresponsible and biased the Security Council was in handling the nuclear issue of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. According to the 1994 Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Agreed Framework, the United States was to refrain from any nuclear threat against the Democratic People's Republic and normalize relations with it. The United States was to provide the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with light-water reactors, and the Democratic People's Republic was to dismantle all its nuclear programmes when the United States completed the construction of the light-water reactors.

However, the United States has not implemented the Agreed Framework, expecting that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would soon collapse. In particular, the Bush Administration, soon after it came into power, declared the annulment of the Agreed Framework and, designating the Democratic People's Republic of Korea part of an "axis of evil", threatened a pre-emptive nuclear strike against it. With United States threats intensifying each day, the Democratic People's Republic had no other option but to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in order to defend the supreme interests of the State, and chose the road of developing nuclear weapons.

However, the Security Council, which is not in a position to say even one word against United States threats against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, adopted a sanctions resolution with regard to the nuclear test of the Democratic People's Republic, which was carried out in self-defence.

Today, many facts and realities of the United Nations eloquently prove that the Security Council is adapted to serve the maintenance of the super-Power status of the United States, rather than the maintenance of international peace and security. Only when the Security Council prohibits unilateralism and high-handedness and rejects double standards in its activities can it become a responsible organ, contributing in particular to international peace and security, and will trust in the Council be improved.

Security Council reform, now under consideration, should also be aimed at ensuring fairness in the Council's activities. Only in this way would reform serve its main purpose — that of requiring the Council to fulfil its mission under the Charter in the changed circumstances of the post-cold-war era. Security Council reform is not a stereotyped issue of expanding its membership and modifying its work method. The Council should be reformed in substance.

With regard to expansion of the membership of the Security Council, we are of the view that the principle should be observed of ensuring the full representation of the non-aligned and developing countries, which make up the majority of the United Nations membership. And we hold that only when Japan, a State guilty of crimes against humanity that distorts and embellishes its history of aggression, is denied a permanent seat can humanity avert the repetition of the history of aggressive wars and holocausts of the past century.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): A few days before the end of the year, we gather here in the General Assembly today, as we do every year, to

analyse the Security Council's report and to exchange once again our views on the state of its reform, the one pending issue necessary to increase its credibility and legitimacy. It seems almost unnecessary to reiterate yet again what we have been reaffirming for quite some time: If we cannot agree on the reform of the Council, it will be very difficult to achieve the objectives for which this Organization was created.

Unfortunately, the Council's report, as in all previous years, is a dry, lengthy text, almost a mere chronicle of meetings and documents. My country, which has been a member of the Council these past two years, has a fresh and up-to-date perception of how it actually works. We have participated with interest in the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, which has achieved progress this year under the efficient presidency of Japan. Together with other non-permanent members, we tried to reach agreement on improving the annual report by making it more substantive and analytic, yet that was not acceptable to the permanent members. Although there have been timid advances regarding the relationship of the Council with the general membership and with other bodies, especially the General Assembly, the agreements reached in the Council's Working Group on Documentation are minimal and of a voluntary nature. We believe that the Council could do more to improve its working methods and to increase consultations with the Assembly so as to produce a more significant annual report.

We firmly believe that the Council could ensure greater transparency in its actions by increasing the quantity and quality of its meetings with civil society. These past two years in the Council, Argentina has maintained ongoing and substantive dialogue with non-governmental organizations on all issues on the Council's agenda. We believe that, in addition to Arria formula meetings, greater efforts could be made. In that sense, we appreciate the positive progress in transparency that has been made these past two years on one issue of great importance — the election of the new Secretary-General.

We have attempted to initiate a discussion on the draft resolution submitted by the group of five small nations — the "Small Five" — in the Working Group on Documentation, but that, too, has proven to be impossible. It would be very good for the Organization if today's debate were to result in a better functioning of the Council, on the understanding that this discussion and the power to make recommendations to the Council are among the competences given by the Charter in its Article 10 to this General Assembly.

These comments on working methods and on the relations between the Council and the Assembly testify to the difficulty of adding new permanent members, as that would have an even greater impact on the principle of the sovereign equality of States.

Argentina once again adds its voice to those within our Organization calling for a new and fresh start, meaning an ample, constructive, sincere and above all realistic negotiation for the reform and expansion of the Security Council. It is our view that there should be no winners or losers in that reform. We have all witnessed the negative experience of the past year — the year of United Nations reform — given that Council reform has yet to be implemented. We believe that rigidity and national ambitions must be overcome for the sake of improving our Organization.

We therefore call once more on all parties to start informal contacts to obtain regional consensuses that take into consideration the variables of rotation and longer membership terms. Our goals for expansion cannot be boundless and any increase in members must take into account the efficiency of the future Security Council. We must be realistic as to the numbers involved in an expansion. The working methods, greater transparency and limitation of the right of veto to such grave cases as genocide, war crimes and others should also be our objectives at this stage of the negotiation and the topic of discussion among the permanent members.

For all of these reasons, we believe that national interests should be coordinated with global interests. The need to maintain international peace and security should be an inalienable objective. Therefore, on behalf of my country, I invite all the members of the General Assembly to assume their responsibility to respond to Security Council reform with a realistic and positive proposal that is the fruit of a commitment shared by all, which would allow the Council to work more efficiently and make it more democratic and inclusive.

Mr. Sen (India): I thank you, Madam, for convening this debate on the report of the Security Council and on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters.

I also thank the Permanent Representative of Qatar, my colleague Ambassador Al-Nasser, for introducing the report. I always admire those who can introduce that which is unintroducible. My friend the Permanent Representative of Switzerland compared it to a telephone directory and, with his usual modesty, he was actually a little unfair to telephone directories, because a telephone directory at least contains useful telephone numbers. If the report is in any way a telephone directory, it is a directory without the numbers. Don't call us; we'll call you.

In any case, I think the report is trite in language and opaque in content. There is very little — in fact, nothing at all — on what shaped particular decisions. There are also omissions wherever there were disagreements in the Council. It is infirm in law and questionable in the context of working methods, which merely shows that the recommendations on new working methods have not really been adopted. Unless there are members who can be held responsible for transforming those recommendations into reality, we do not see how they can be adopted.

In any case, I think that the report is really the symptom and symbol of a much deeper crisis. It is, I think, something that we all can see. The majority of developing countries, which constitute the majority of the Assembly, and the small and vulnerable States should ask themselves if the exhaustion of discussing reform day and night for more than one and a half years may have actually been intensified by disillusionment with its results. Does this not also, ultimately, deny a sense of ownership? Do they have a sense that the Organization is more responsive to the small and vulnerable, that there is greater fairness and greater justice in the Organization?

As I said earlier, this is symptomatic of a deeper crisis. As we know, the old equilibrium of the cold war is gone, but no new equilibrium seems to have taken its place. The old world is dead, the new powerless to be born. Instead of the slow and sad night's departing and the rising of the morn, what we really have is a twilight world with all its burdens and sorrows. In that context, the United Nations could and ought to have been the midwife of history, but it is not able to play this role because it has not been able to effectively reform itself. This is not something that affects only the United Nations. It also holds up a pattern of governance that is in fundamental crisis.

Take the International Monetary Fund (IMF), for instance. Its articles were decided in 1944, and the tension between the world of 1944-1945 and the vastly changed world of today is really the reason why it is unable to lessen the conditionalities on developing countries, even in the latest Policy Support Instrument of 2005. That is why its fiscal recommendations actually deepened the Asian economic crisis of 1997-1998, and why it does not have even a single idea worthy of the name on how to address the imbalances which are at the heart of the economic instability of our times.

The structure of the Security Council was created around the same time as the structure of the IMF, in 1945. It is therefore no coincidence that the proposed remedies or the solutions are approximately the same, namely addressing the question of the veto, the questions of transparency and accountability, the question of reassigning seats on the basis of a new formula, and the question of appointments. This is not just a coincidence. It shows that by keeping alive this structure, what we have really done, ultimately, is to bring its arms, hands and legs into the twenty-first century, but keep the head and the heart in the middle of the twentieth century. How can this strange creature walking about revitalize anything or be of any relevance to the world?

I think, therefore, that it is amply clear that — and we are not being unfair here — if, let us say, the IMF could actually maintain world economic stability, and if the Security Council could actually maintain world peace and security, then even their imperfect, antiquated, perhaps unjust structures could be accepted. But this is manifestly not the case. That is why there is an urgent need for reform.

By not reforming, we are actually keeping alive an antiquated and counterproductive system of governance externally — outside these walls — that is preventing the delivery of development and of results that benefit of all countries, hence the exhaustion which is visible even today in this Hall, in the attendance and in the sense of ownership. It is necessary, therefore, to address the real problems. I am not speaking today in terms of the draft resolution or text submitted by the group of four, and it is unfortunate that many continue to speak in terms of the Uniting for Consensus resolutions and texts of the past. We have to see what the problem is and then devise solutions to address it.

Here, the analogy of painting a portrait is very relevant. Results can be achieved if we keep throwing away initial sketches, if we keep changing the canvas. Ultimately, we will still improve — hopefully — the portrait of the subject. But we will never get anywhere if we change, or throw away, the subject of the portrait. It is important, therefore, to see what the real problems are today and consider solutions to address them.

I should therefore like to explore, together with other members of the Assembly, what these real problems are and whether we can reach an understanding on them, and then we can decide on the elements that could provide a solution. There is no point in reform for the sake of reform, as has been said, or in fashioning solutions to problems that are quite different from those that we face, because those solutions would not help in the least. They would simply give the illusion of reform — the illusion of change — without any real change. By simply expanding the Security Council without addressing the problem, the illusion of reform may be achieved, but would any of the problems that we actually face be addressed?

The Security Council itself, as we all know, seems to be reaching the end of its shelf life. Structural cracks have already appeared. What we need, therefore, is a capital master plan, not only for the building but for what is inside it, around the corner. That is amply clear from the many recent events that have been mentioned by so many members during the course of this debate. The Secretary-General, for instance, has said that its handling of certain recent events has shaken the faith of the world in its authority, its legitimacy and its integrity.

No real serious problem has been successfully and fully resolved; many are arguably worse. What we have seen is proof of Newton's Third Law of Motion — that for every force, there is a force equal in magnitude acting in the opposite direction. It has been said: "Let justice be done though the heavens fall." But the justice of the Security Council, if done at all, is done after the heavens fall. That is why we have been so busy catching skylarks.

In the post-cold-war period, the checks and balances that earlier gave space to the General Assembly are no longer there. Therefore it is not surprising that we have seen a progressive usurpation of the powers of the General Assembly by the Security Council. This has been experienced in the reform process itself. I will not go into detail, but let me mention the Peacebuilding Commission, among many other things. It has been discussed in the work of this body. It is responsible for the deeper disillusionments and for the divisions. If we go on like this, we will see only a progressive coarsening of the United Nations, with deepening mistrust.

Can this progressive usurpation really be set right by adding to the number of non-permanent members — by having renewability? I am merely posing questions. Can we really redress the balance in this manner? The situation is fairly acute. There is a progressive lack of legitimacy, decisions are not optimal and acceptability is low, so that an increased use of force is necessary. In this situation, the Security Council is something that an individual State cannot easily defy; that the Charter cannot effectively bind; that the General Assembly cannot easily constrain; and that the International Court of Justice cannot automatically review. The right of review, as we know from Justice Marshall's famous decision in *Marbury vs. Madison*, is a fundamental democratic tenet. Would adding more non-permanent members actually address this problem of the correlation of power? Would it actually redress the situation? Or would it not, as the chairman of the Forum of Small States — which form the vast majority of this Organization — my friend the Permanent Representative of Singapore, said, would it not, rather, make this problem far worse?

It would, quite obviously, make it far worse by ensuring that the 80 or so Members of the United Nations that have never sat on the Security Council would continue not to sit on the Council. If there is the element of renewability — if non-permanent members can go on being renewed — would that not actually reduce the chance of a seat for a small and vulnerable State, which today can hope to sit on the Council once in 40 years? Would not that chance be reduced to once in 80 years?

Let us look at another problem that has been highlighted by many Members: the problem of accountability. Unfortunately, many have conflated this with the problem of elections. Do elections alone actually ensure accountability? Are they sufficient? They may be a necessary condition, but are they a sufficient condition to ensure accountability? Are the non-permanent members today accountable, and, if so, to whom? Are the regional and other groups that vote

for and elect non-permanent members able to hold them accountable? Elections, therefore — particularly if they take the form of auctions — can hardly ensure accountability.

We have a situation in which a body is imperfect. Can an election to that body of non-permanent members, in the face of the fact of power, really make the members more accountable? Is it not likely to make them less accountable and to make it more difficult for them to be accountable?

As in the case of economics, when welfare is maximized, not simply through getting prices right or through liberalization, but through direct, positive policies dealing with employment — which, it may be remembered, was really the Keynesian idea behind the stillborn International Trade Organization — separate positive policies on accountability are required. That would mean looking at the question of a permanent revolution through a permanent self-sustaining review mechanism, possibly through an amendment or an addition to Chapter II of the Charter, which would embody the democratic principle — the oldest democratic principle, which goes back to Rousseau — of the right of recall. Then we would have real accountability. And that, in fact, was suggested by a few very significant developing countries, members of the African Union, at a recent and well-attended informal meeting.

In that way we could have real accountability. Such accountability must encompass the United Nations as a whole — including the Secretariat — and not just the Security Council. The question of accountability would touch the new permanent members, it would touch all non-permanent members, and it would touch the Secretariat. It should encompass all of those. Here, I think that the United States Constitution should be a model, because it has an ideal balance between flexibility and accountability. Therefore here, too, the Secretary-General could have the flexibility to appoint Deputy Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General, but with hearings and confirmations by the General Assembly to ensure the principle of accountability.

We must, therefore, consider the real problems that exist. Would the simple addition of non-permanent members with renewable extended seats address the problems that really exist? Those problems are the result of an unnatural concentration of blood in one organ and its lack of flow through other organs, bringing them to near-atrophy. This brings to mind some lines from a poem by Dr. Johnson, contained in his little-known play *Irene*:

> "A happy land, where circulating power
> Flows through each member of the embodied
> State".

But if there is not such a flow, if we actually have the fact of oligarchy and the fact of a concentration of power, would not a solution that does not address the problems of a concentration of power, the problem of oligarchy, the question of accountability or the question of correlation of power be simply reform for the sake of reform, giving us the illusion of reform without any actual reform?

So we have to be very clear about what the real problems are and how they should be addressed. Only then can we possibly devise solutions that would really be of help to the United Nations and change the fundamental balance.

One of the leading lights of the doctrine of simply adding to the non-permanent membership and of having renewable elections, and so forth, mentioned at great length the problems of the Security Council and the problems with peace and security in the world today, and yet felt that simply by adding renewable non-permanent seats we could solve those problems. He referred at great length to the problem of the usurpation of the authority of the General Assembly, yet felt that adding non-permanent members could address that. If that is the case, why have non-permanent members not mitigated those problems so far? Why have they not been able to check usurpation?

So let us not simply have reform for the sake of reform. Similarly, in looking at an interim solution, we should consider whether such a solution would actually address the fundamental problems of the correlation of power, oligarchy and accountability. Otherwise, the interim solution would again be simply reform for the sake of reform. It would give the illusion of change without any real change, and leave all of the real problems unaddressed. Indeed, it might even make them worse.

So let us not do what the poet Shelley once warned against — that is, go to a gin shop for a leg of mutton. If one wants gin, one should go to a gin shop;

one should not go there for a leg of mutton. That would not be helpful.

Also, if we look at the question of renewable seats, we will see that that has actually been tried out. It was tried out — actually permitted and practised — in an organization called the League of Nations. It neither saved the League of Nations nor ensured accountability. That is a fact of history.

When I look at the arguments of the proponents of adding renewable non-permanent seats, I am reminded of one of the greatest novelists of the United States today, Thomas Pynchon, and his recently published novel *Against the Day*, in which he asks, "What were they doing out here, this late in history" with all the "dismal metonymies of the dead" behind them?

I think that it is important to address these real questions. We have no dogma about any particular solution. We have no dogma about this or that fixed idea. As I said, let us paint the portrait of an actual subject. Let us not throw away the subject. We can go on shifting the canvases — we do not mind; we have no dogma about that. We can go on throwing away the sketches — that is not a problem. But let us not throw away the subject, because unless we address the central problem, what is the point?

Turning to working methods, I think that the most important resolution on working methods was — if my memory does not fail me — resolution 267 (III) of 14 April 1949. That resolution was actually adopted. It dealt with the problem of the veto; it dealt with the problem of the General Assembly giving advice even on questions that were being discussed by the Security Council; it dealt with the question of the troop-contributing countries being part of the decision-making, not just the discussion; it dealt with a host of issues — I will not list them, so as not to take up too much of the Assembly's time. But members can look it up.

There are two things there that strike us. First, if we compare the world of 1949 to the world of today, we will see that there has been a progressive diminution of the authority of the General Assembly. At least in 1949 that resolution was actually introduced and adopted overwhelmingly. Today, we have reached a point where it is difficult for the group of five small nations — the "Small Five" (S-5) — even to introduce a draft resolution, let alone have it adopted.

Secondly, why have new working methods not been adopted in the past more than half a century? Quite clearly, they have not been adopted — that is a fact. Will adding more non-permanent members lead to the adoption of new working methods? Unless there are new permanent members in the midst of the permanent members who introduce the elective principle — the accountability principle — and who are surrounded by separate, direct action on accountability through a self-sustaining, permanent review mechanism — specifically, through additions to Chapter II regarding the right of recall — would such working methods be achieved? Or would that be done by simply adopting yet another resolution or adding new permanent members?

Above all, would such a solution empower Africa? No reform, unless it empowers Africa, which has been at the receiving end of history and continues to be in many respects, is of any use; it is unavailing. Will it really increase the access of small and vulnerable countries to the Security Council? Will it increase their participation in the subsidiary bodies of the Council? Those are the questions that we have to ask ourselves.

This resolution — 267 (III) — mentions, as I said, the question of the veto. Certainly, many Members have talked about the principle of the veto, which is an important principle. It is said that although the devil is in the details, we have to examine everything in detail, minutely and with some fineness. What is the problem of the veto? Essentially — at least according to all the discussions that I heard yesterday and today in this Hall — it is either a problem of quantity, of immediately giving the veto to more countries, or a problem of quality, of how to place restrictions on the veto that would ensure that it is used to further the principles of international law and the interests of the international community, and not simply to further individual national interests.

Is that not really the problem? And if it is, can any restrictions be placed on the veto? There are those who believe and say that the veto has never been amended. The short answer is that the veto has been amended. The only thing is, it has been amended through an informal process and therefore through something that remains legally infirm.

The Charter clearly speaks of the concurring votes of all of the permanent members. If we read the

Charter commentaries of 1946, we find that abstention was treated as a veto. But that is not the case today. So what we have is the formless amendment of the principle of the veto. The problem is that that kind of amendment is actually a form of lawmaking through lawbreaking, because the Charter can be amended only through a formal process that is set out in Articles 108 and 109; it cannot simply be formlessly amended by the permanent members. But that is what has happened. The downside is that the General Assembly cannot challenge as legally invalid a decision by the Security Council with an abstention by one of the permanent members because of the principle of estoppel — because it has been accepted for so long. Juridically speaking, the Assembly cannot even insist on continuing this practice, because the permanent members can go back to the earlier interpretation at any time they choose, without any legal hindrance.

Therefore, we have to see how restrictions can be placed on the veto. I believe that the United States Constitution — to which I have already referred — also contains some very fundamental ideas concerning this question, because it stipulates that a presidential veto can be overridden by the Congress. Here, perhaps we could look at special majorities in the Security Council or the General Assembly that could override a Council veto.

Then again, we have this fundamental tension in the Charter between maintaining peace and security — saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war, as the famous phrase goes — and actually defending individual rights. The Security Council is very quick to include matters involving individual rights on its agenda, but without completing the logic of it, even though it is wrong to bring matters that really amount to a formless amendment of Article 39, of what constitutes a threat to peace and security. There have been other such amendments, such as the amendment to Article 29, which empowers the setting up of subsidiary bodies, but through which legal tribunals have been set up. Here, quite clearly, the Security Council simply does not have the legal power, so it cannot give such power to a tribunal. The Council is a body for implementing the law on peace and security, for being a firefighter on peace and security, not for making laws.

The Security Council puts individual rights on its agenda, but it is not willing to work to the full the paradigm of individual rights, where there is no place for the veto. The veto was not up set up within the paradigm of individual rights. So here again is the question of restriction. Other restrictions on the right of the veto are possible. In particular, if we look at Oppenheim's extremely authoritative *International Law: A Treatise,* it clearly says that if a permanent member were to use the veto to prevent a Charter amendment for which well above a two-thirds majority of the membership has voted — and which is therefore in the interests of the international community — that would be an abuse of the veto. It would be illegal, because it would be not using the veto to further the interests of the international community. Therefore, even a veto on this kind of amendment is subject both to restriction and to legal challenge.

Having dealt with these issues, let us be very clear that today's rules of procedure of the Security Council — in fact, the Council's working methods in general — do not leave much to be desired; rather, they leave everything to be desired. These provisional rules of procedure are provisional to the point of not being there. Thus, we have some kind of new rule of procedure on how to make encroachment respectable, and emasculation of the General Assembly acceptable. It is a triumph of power over reason, rules and logic. The real problems that we face today — which spill over into the problems of peace and security — are the problems showing that the Security Council is not a solution, but a part of the problem. It is a fetter holding back change, a fetter on addressing the problems of the twenty-first century, a fetter on peace and prosperity for the world.

Therefore, together with our colleagues in the Group of Four, with the group of five small nations — the "Small Five" (S-5), with our colleagues in the African Union, even with our colleagues in Uniting for Consensus, and with the wider membership — especially the developing countries, which we need to listen to in particular — we intend to work out new proposals that actually address the problems and therefore provide a real solution, rather than simply tilting at windmills, living in a world of fantasy and addressing imaginary problems with imaginary solutions.

For us, the choice today is very clear: either we move forward and become relevant, or we fall back. The General Assembly feels the mildew coming over it and its bones turn to a paste. The choice is between substance and being content with a shadow, between

the reality of change and mere illusion, between continuing as we are and continuing in an even worse form.

We will certainly work on these proposals with other Member States. We are open to ideas. We are prepared to look at all suggestions, at all possible ideas, so long as just one condition is met: that they address the real problems that we have outlined. Only then can we have a situation in which — as one of the leaders said at a recent forum in New Delhi — we overcome the problems of division, military blocs, force and red-bar activities and make this body truly a force for peace, progress and prosperity.

We look on this, finally, as an inclusive process. As developing countries, we want to address the problem of the exclusion of developing countries, but we wish to address the problem of exclusion in an inclusive way. That is the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, of what we believe in and of what we stand for.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): It is well known that the international system is currently undergoing a functional transformation accompanied by acute crises and entrenched conflicts. In the final analysis, that is the root cause of the obstacles to the reform of the United Nations and, in particular, of the Security Council. We would like to hope that this transformation of the bipolar system of the cold war will lead to a world order based on collective approaches and respect for international law.

The understanding that there is no alternative to addressing existing issues through multilateral diplomacy, with the United Nations playing the central role, is, as we have seen, making headway at this session of the General Assembly. Importantly, the Organization continues to undergo renewal to adapt itself to the tasks and challenges of our time. The scale and complexity of United Nations reform vividly highlight the need to reach the widest possible agreement, ideally a consensus, of all Member States on the whole spectrum of reform issues. That approach remains fully applicable in relation to such a sensitive issue as Security Council reform.

The differences of position on that problem remain deep, and no model of Council enlargement today enjoys the truly broad support of the Members of the United Nations. We are convinced that premature action on that important aspect of United Nations reform is unacceptable, while the search for agreement should continue on the basis of collective and transparent efforts. It is in the common interest not to allow any premature steps in the enlargement of the Security Council that could negatively affect other tracks of the Organization's reform process and in general the effectiveness of United Nations activities aimed at tackling urgent international issues.

Russia's principled stand on that matter is unchanged. We are ready to consider constructively any reasonable option for enlarging Security Council membership that is based on the broadest agreement within the United Nations — an agreement broader than the two thirds of the votes of General Assembly members legally required to adopt a decision on that matter.

Making the Council a more representative body remains a key target, but it should be done without undermining the effectiveness of its work, since that body bears the main responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. That is why we are in favour of preserving the compact membership of the Council and are convinced of the counterproductivity of ideas that limit the prerogatives of its current permanent members, including the institution of the right of veto as a whole.

Russia has been a consistent supporter of and active participant in the efforts of the Security Council aimed at improving its working methods, including enhancing the transparency of its activities and improving dialogue with non-members. In that work, we take due account of provisions of the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit.

We should recognize the positive developments of recent years in the practices of the Security Council. In particular, much has been done within the framework of the existing procedures to provide an opportunity for all concerned States to deliver in due time their opinion to members of the Council and to receive more complete and current information on its activities. The facts and statistical data referred to in the statement made by the President of the Security Council, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of Qatar, speak for themselves.

The members of the Security Council appreciate the important contributions of troop-contributing countries to the success of United Nations peacekeeping operations overseen by the Security

Council. They enhance cooperation with such Member States and with the Secretariat. Furthermore, the Council, through its Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, will be taking the necessary steps effectively to involve troop-contributing countries and other interested States in decision-making on peacekeeping issues.

We continue to believe that the expertise provided to the Security Council in the military aspects of peacekeeping would be improved through the revitalization of the activities of the Military Staff Committee, with flexible involvement in its work of all Security Council members and countries contributing troops to peacekeeping operations.

Yet another manifestation of the rational transparency of the Security Council work is the enhancement by its subsidiary bodies on sanctions of dialogue with a wide range of countries and regional and other organizations in order to improve sanctions regimes and ensure strict compliance with Security Council embargoes on arms exports into conflict zones.

We highly appreciate the significant work of the Security Council's Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions headed by Ambassador Kenzo Oshima, the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations. One concrete outcome of its activities is the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2006/507) that was adopted on 19 July 2006, giving a detailed outline of the positive developments in the Council's practice. The sometimes difficult experience of the consultations on measures outlined in that document vividly demonstrates that initiatives to improve the Council's working methods promote progress in reform of that principal United Nations organ only when they enjoy the unanimous support of its members.

On the basis of those principles, Russia is committed to continuing constructively to facilitate the achievement of a necessary agreement in this area, guided by its responsibility as a permanent member of the Security Council.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): Allow me to begin by expressing my appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Qatar for presenting the annual report of the Council to the Assembly. The report deserves our careful consideration in all its aspects, including its format and content.

We associate ourselves with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and concur with him that a more comprehensive and analytical annual report to the General Assembly assessing the work of the Council, including in cases where the Council has failed to act, is necessary for a thorough consideration.

As to the working methods of the Council, we have noted that a few steps were taken in the period under review. Although important, those steps have yet to meet the legitimate expectations of the general membership, which has long called for genuine transparency and real change in the Council's working methods. Transparency, impartiality and fairness are key premises on which the Security Council should base its approach in discharging its Charter-mandated responsibilities. Nonetheless, we continue to witness a tendency to undermine those principles by a few permanent members of the Council.

Such practices continued to occur in the period under review, including a continued disregard of Article 31 of the Charter, which entitles any non-Council member to participate in discussions on matters affecting it. The violation of that principle has included denial of the right of the concerned countries to apprise the Council of their positions on issues affecting the Council's decisions and their immediate national interests, or giving them the possibility to speak only after decisions have been adopted. Furthermore, selective notification about some meetings of the Council, reluctance to convene daily briefings and restriction of the participation of the general membership in some open debates are other examples of persistent deficiencies.

In our view, to increase the transparency of its work and improve its working methods, the Council should seriously take into consideration the relevant provisions of the Charter as well as the resolutions that clarify its relationship with the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations, specifically Assembly resolution 58/126. In the same vein, rule 48 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure should be thoroughly observed, and, accordingly, closed meetings and informal consultations should be kept to a minimum and as the exception they were meant to be.

In the period under review, we have witnessed an unjustifiable increase in the number of cases of

encroachment by the Security Council on the powers and mandates of other United Nations bodies. In so doing, the Council has taken up issues that present no threat to international peace and security or that fall within the competence of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Quick and unnecessary resort to Chapter VII of the Charter and the threat or use of sanctions in cases where either no action has been necessary or provisions of Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter had not been fully utilized is another dangerous trend which has marked the Council's approach regarding certain issues, despite the dissenting views of an overwhelming majority of the States Members of the United Nations.

Even more disturbing is the persistence and exacerbation of the pattern of behaviour on the part of certain Powers permanently represented on the Council that have, on the one hand, continued to push that body to no action, rendering it incapacitated in cases where action was really and urgently necessary, while on the other hand rushing the Council to take unwarranted action in cases that posed no threat to international peace and security nor presented any reason for the Council to be involved.

Sadly, there is a clear tendency to downgrade the Security Council to "a tool in the toolbox" of certain Powers, to quote one of the permanent members who recently acknowledged this fact. Such a dangerous intention and practice has seriously damaged the credibility and legitimacy of the Council and, as the Secretary-General warned in the course of Israeli aggression against Lebanon, has eroded its authority universally. We should not miss the momentum to rectify these shortcomings in our endeavour to reform the work of the Council.

The report refers to the actions taken by the Security Council regarding the peaceful nuclear programme of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It must be emphasized that far from reflecting the concerns of the international community, as advertised, the approach imposed on the Council in addressing this issue flouts the stated position of the overwhelming majority of the international community, clearly reflected in the most recent statements by the heads of State and Government of the 118 members of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which have clearly supported Iran's rights and rejected the actions by the Council. It is indeed deplorable that the propensity of certain permanent members to abuse the Security Council as an instrument of pressure has prevented them from even considering a multitude of alternatives presented by Iran and others that could, and still can, guarantee Iran's rights and at the same time preclude any possibility of diversion, and in the process strengthen the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The report also refers to the situation in the Middle East, especially the Palestinian question, which has continued to be under consideration by the Council. In the period under review, the situation on the ground deteriorated as a result of Israeli aggression and crimes against the people in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon, and its continued occupation of Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian lands. The Council was persistently rendered ineffective in addressing these crimes despite their gravity. During the period under review, two draft resolutions on the Palestinian issue were again vetoed, and efforts to end Israeli aggression against Lebanon were thwarted and delayed for 34 long days. Moreover, no action has been allowed, or even contemplated, to ensure compliance by the Israeli regime with many Security Council resolutions adopted over the last six decades.

Allow me to conclude by addressing the reform of the Security Council. It is abundantly clear that the composition of the Council does not correspond to today's realities, and this deficiency should be thoroughly addressed. The debate in the Working Group has proved that, despite some limited success in the area of working methods, significant progress has yet to be made on substantive matters such as the size and composition of the Council and the veto power. We continue to believe that the Council must become more democratic, more representative, more accountable and more effective in accordance with the provisions of the Charter. The deficiency in legitimacy that the Council is obviously suffering from today will be rectified only by creating a situation whereby developing countries are more fairly represented in the Council, the question of representation of more than one billion Muslims is adequately addressed, and the democratization of the Council is sufficiently accomplished.

Mr. Penjo (Bhutan): My delegation welcomes the opportunity to discuss the report of the Security Council and the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters. In this connection, we associate

ourselves with the statement delivered by the permanent representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

My delegation is concerned that little headway has been made in our efforts to reform the Security Council. It is important for us to remind ourselves that no reform of the United Nations is complete without the reform of the Security Council. All of us agree that the Council's current structure is far removed from the realities of the present world, and its working methods and decision-making processes are far from being transparent, inclusive and democratic.

As the organ charged with maintaining international peace and security, it is imperative for the Security Council to enhance its legitimacy and effectiveness. The Council has to improve its working methods so as to be more transparent and accountable to the wider membership. Its structure has to change in order to be more representative and democratic. Today's geopolitical situation dictates that membership be expanded in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. In that context, we continue to support the aspirations of India, Japan, Germany and Brazil to be permanent members. We also support adequate representation of Africa in the permanent category.

As you stated yesterday morning, Madam, while our efforts so far have not led to an agreement, we should not lose hope in our ability to make progress on that important matter. It is therefore our fervent hope that, under your dynamic leadership, the General Assembly at its sixty-first session will be able to bring to fruition the long-overdue reform of the Security Council. In that context, my delegation would like to reiterate that the proposal submitted by the Group of Four at the sixtieth session addresses both structural and substantive issues of Security Council reform and provides a good basis for working towards a formula that will command the widest possible support of the membership.

Mr. Yaroshevich (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, the delegation of Belarus welcomes the statement made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The need to preserve and strengthen the role of the Security Council as a central element in the maintenance of international peace and security is beyond question. Many are the instances when the Council has worked to attain those noble goals and achieved real results, saving lives, preventing international conflicts, and restoring stability in regions throughout the world. At the same time, the Security Council has been unable to take timely action to prevent the escalation of the conflict in the Middle East.

The effective work of the Council not only requires a speedy and concerted response to the destabilization of international relations throughout the world, but also presupposes the need to take balanced decisions in that regard. A quest for balanced reactions to emerging conflict situations in international relations should be one of the decisive factors in the activity of the Security Council. That should be kept in mind particularly in the elaboration of approaches to resolving the issue of Iran's nuclear programme. It is equally important to take into account the positions of all interested sides, including the Government of the Sudan, in addressing the problem of Darfur.

The ongoing evolution of the international situation requires the Security Council to work on complex regional issues without diverting its attention from others. In that regard, we are concerned by the attempts of some members of the Council to bring before the Council issues that are not related to the maintenance of international peace and security and the consideration of which is the responsibility of the General Assembly.

It is important to pursue efforts to enhance the openness of the Security Council's work. Transparency will raise the level of trust in and respect for its activity. There is a need to increase the number of public meetings of the Council in which non-members can participate and to propose ideas to help the Security Council make more operative and effective decisions.

The delegation of Belarus reiterates its position on the need for deep reform of the composition of the Security Council. In our opinion, the enlargement of the Security Council by including developing countries should be a key element of the reform. We also believe that an additional seat in the Security Council should be allocated to the Eastern European Group.

The composition of the Security Council should better reflect the geopolitical situation of the twenty-first century. Nobody rejects that idea; in fact, everybody agrees with it and uses it. However, the process of Council reform has yet to make progress

this year. A strong push and significant impulse are required to boost the process of Security Council reform.

In the course of debate on existing concepts of reform, the idea of choosing one as a basis for further negotiation and reaching a consensus has been repeatedly voiced. The representative of China, among others, referred to that yesterday, and we agree. The situation calls on us to make an atypical decision. Why should we not borrow the method that was used in the Security Council during the elections of the Secretary-General? The General Assembly could take a straw poll on every version offered for reform. A version that receives the most votes will be a basis for further negotiations. Certainly, the elements of other versions would also be taken into account in the further work on the formula for Council enlargement.

It is high time to move from words to deeds. A first practical step must be taken to define a basic approach that enjoys the largest support of the Member States, including the permanent members of the Security Council. Once that is done, we will be able to move ahead significantly towards the creation of a Security Council that will be optimally adapted to the realities of the modern world.

Mr. Choi Young-jin (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the Security Council for this month, Ambassador Nassir Al-Nasser of Qatar, for introducing the annual report of the Security Council. I would also like to commend the efforts of the Secretariat in producing the report.

According to the report, the volume and scope of the Security Council's activities continued to increase over the past year. We note with concern that Africa is still the scene of the majority of issues before the Security Council.

There have been some positive developments in Africa. Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo seem to be on track in moving from conflict to stability, with the process of nation-building under way and bolstered by recent successful elections. In many other parts of the continent, however, instability continues. In particular, the humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region of the Sudan is still going on, and fresh reports of increasing violence indicate that the situation is not improving. Another area of serious concern is Côte d'Ivoire, where elections once again could not take place as scheduled, and anxieties are increasing. We hope to see improvements in those countries over the upcoming year.

During the past year, the Security Council has continued to devote considerable attention to the situation in Iraq. Unfortunately, the security situation in Iraq is still deeply troubling. We appreciate the continuing efforts of President Jalal Talabani, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and the Iraqi Government as a whole to overcome the security and other challenges and work towards national reconciliation. We welcome the progress on the International Compact with Iraq. The Republic of Korea remains committed to helping Iraq implement the Compact and achieve its national vision, which seeks to build a secure, unified, federal and democratic nation founded on the principles of freedom and equality.

With regard to Lebanon, we support the continuing efforts of the Security Council to establish peace and stability in the country. We support Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) on the strengthening of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, and we are committed to playing a substantive role in that endeavour.

Elsewhere in Asia, Afghanistan has made some encouraging progress on the political, security and reconstruction fronts. Despite those positive signs, the deteriorating security situation in the southern and eastern parts of the country is distressing, as is the increased activity of the Taliban and other armed groups. It is clear that the international community must continue to assist Afghanistan in its transition to peace and stability. For our part, the Republic of Korea will maintain the ongoing troop presence that we have provided since 2002.

We note with appreciation that the Security Council responded firmly and swiftly to the actions taken by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, adopting resolutions 1695 (2006) on its missile launch and 1718 (2006) on its nuclear test. We hope that the Democratic People's Republic will heed the united voice of the international community and take concrete steps for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and beyond. In this regard, we welcome the scheduled resumption of the Six-Party Talks in Beijing on 18 December and hope that the Talks will make substantial progress towards our common goal of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Let me now turn to the issue of Security Council reform. The Republic of Korea fully recognizes the importance of Security Council reform in the context of overall reform of the United Nations. We support a reformed Council that is more effective, representative, transparent, democratic and accountable. We believe that these principles are widely shared among Member States and that they should be applied not only to Security Council reform but also to overall reform efforts throughout the Organization. If any one of these principles is abandoned in pursuit of hasty reform, the long-term effects will be to weaken the authority of the Council and undermine the United Nations reform process as a whole.

We welcome the initiatives that have so far been put forward to enhance the transparency, accountability and inclusiveness of the Council's work. We are pleased to see that ways to improve transparency and working methods are under consideration within the Council. We welcome these developments and support the steps taken so far by the Council to improve its working methods. Building on this progress, we believe that further reform is needed to make the Council more transparent, democratic and efficient.

Reform of the Security Council's working methods goes hand in hand with the reform of its membership. On this issue, we share the position of the Uniting for Consensus group that the best way to reform the Council membership is through an increase in non-permanent, elected seats, not through the addition of permanent members. The proposal of the Uniting for Consensus group would make it possible for each region to devise its own arrangements to ensure that large, medium and small States are all represented in an enlarged Security Council.

The Republic of Korea remains ready for dialogue with any other Member States in the hope of achieving our common goal of reforming the Security Council. We look forward to an open and transparent process of consultation and negotiation, with a view to reaching the broadest possible agreement on this critical issue. We hope that in our collective wisdom, we can reform the Security Council so that it can better fulfil its mandate.

Mr. Faaborg-Andersen (Denmark): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to the important issue of Security Council reform and expansion.

The 2005 World Summit clearly spelled out the need for early reform of the Security Council. We have seen progress on working methods, but when it comes to expansion we are facing a stalemate. To ensure a more efficient United Nations, the Security Council's structure and membership must reflect the realities of the twenty-first century. We cannot allow the present stalemate to continue. The perfect solution might not be within reach, but in that case we should be willing to accept less than perfect, as long as the overall purpose is served. The time has come to search all avenues for ideas and proposals. All parties must exercise flexibility and be willing to compromise in order to reach consensus.

Allow me briefly to restate Denmark's position on Security Council reform.

The Security Council must continue to play a decisive role in the promotion of peace, security, human rights and democracy. To do so more effectively, broader representation is needed. Therefore Denmark supports parallel expansion by increasing the number of permanent and non-permanent seats and by including both developing and developed countries as permanent members.

Furthermore, the Council's working methods and transparency must be strengthened. We welcome the work being done by the Council to improve its working methods, especially efforts to enhance the efficiency and transparency of the work, as well as stronger interaction with non-Council members. We look forward to the full implementation of the improved working methods and urge the Council to continue exploring ways to further enhance them.

For 13 years, reform of the Security Council has been on our agenda. The time has come to search for new ideas, to show flexibility and to compromise. I can assure the Assembly that Denmark will continue to engage actively in constructive dialogue on how to reform the Council.

Mr. Romero-Martínez (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): On this occasion, my delegation wishes to raise several points that are of particular importance for my country, taking into account their connection with the maintenance of international peace and security and the process of reform within our Organization. We are founding members of the Organization, and we have supported it throughout its history, abiding by its decisions, promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes, complying with the obligatory nature of the highest tribunal of justice and, above all, by complying with the norms of international law.

First, we express appreciation for the report of the Security Council, contained in document A/61/2, presented to the General Assembly by Ambassador Al-Nasser of the State of Qatar, President of the Security Council for the month of December. The report reflects the work and quantifies and illustrates the main items that the Council dealt with between 1 August 2005 to 31 July 2006.

My country, Honduras, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), shares most of the views expressed yesterday by the President of the NAM on reform of the Security Council. We advocate more and better coherence in its work, transparency in the political decision-making process and the final adoption of its provisional rules of procedure as official rules. These issues require immediate attention within the reform process.

For my delegation, the report of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council (A/60/47), which has been in operation since 1993, is of crucial importance. We have been following its work and have participated and spoken in its meetings when we felt that that was appropriate.

The process of Security Council reform should focus in particular on matters related to the Council's working methods. We recognize the efforts made by the Council itself to achieve greater transparency in its decision-making process and, above all, to provide an opportunity, as is now the case, for Member States to speak in open debates on specific items. We believe that these opportunities should be increased because we are certain that this approach makes a substantial contribution to the Council's discussions.

I wish to recall the chapter of the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/1) devoted to the strengthening of the United Nations and, in particular, paragraph 161 of the report, which states, "I have always maintained that no reform of the United Nations will be complete without the reform of the Security Council".

During the discussion and adoption of the Millennium Declaration, our delegation participated and endorsed that document, in which our heads of State or Government called for "a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects" (*resolution 55/2, para. 30*). Five years later, they affirmed that reform of the Security Council was "an essential element of our overall effort to reform the United Nations" (*resolution 60/1, para. 153*). We support all of those principles and concepts.

Increasing the membership of that body within the framework of the principle of equitable geographical representation, in either of the two categories, is essential and should be seen as something that will help it to make the decisions it adopts more democratic and transparent. Accordingly, achieving the desired consensus will make a more comprehensive contribution to the strengthening of the United Nations as a whole.

Procedural reform should also include a serious, in-depth, complete consideration of the right of the veto, by both current and aspiring permanent members. We agree with the idea of ongoing dialogue between those with differing views, with the ultimate goal of finding a consensus solution.

With regard to increasing the membership per se, our Organization has expanded its horizons, and the situation in 1945 was not the same as today's. The complexity of the international situation, globalization, progress in information technology, and the many other dizzying changes that are occurring in the world, have placed some States members of the United Nations system in the vanguard in terms of their activities at the global and regional levels in areas such as international cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security.

After more than a decade of work, we have felt that it is important to give fresh impetus to the reform process. Countries such as Brazil in Latin America, India and Japan in Asia and Germany in Europe, along with appropriate representation for Africa, could make a contribution to the work of the Council. Therefore, we believe that they should in future have an opportunity to serve this very important United Nations organ.

We congratulate the new non-permanent members which will represent the various regions for the next 24 months, in particular, the sister Republic of Panama

for Latin America and the Caribbean, a member of the Central American Integration System, as well as our friends Belgium, Indonesia, Italy and South Africa.

In conclusion, I wish to say that Honduras hopes to see a more democratic Organization whose principal organs reflect the aspirations of our peoples, with genuine transparency, more just and equitable representation in accordance with the historical development of our society. In particular, we hope to have an Organization which can promote and maintain peace, the peace that we all long for, that we all seek, the peace that is the dream of our children, our women and our men — indeed, the peace that is the dream of us all.

Mr. Jenie (Indonesia): Madam President, thank you very much indeed for convening the debate on this very important topic. We would also like to thank Ambassador Nassir Al-Nasser of Qatar, President of the Security Council for the month of December, for presenting the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, as contained in document A/61/2.

Indonesia associates itself with the remarks made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We are once again pleased to welcome the report of the Security Council, which provides us with a summary of the work of the Council over the preceding year pertaining to its mandate in the area of the international peace and security. However, the report still equips us only with a descriptive picture of the Council's work. We are aware of the difficulty and hard work involved in the preparation of the report. However, we believe that we still can inject it with more vigour in order to make the report more illuminating. We hope that in the future, the annual report will also contain, among other things, an analytical assessment of the cases under the Council's consideration and an explanatory discussion of the constraints and opportunities that the Council faces in the implementation of its resolutions.

With regard to the reform of the Security Council, we would like to reiterate our position that it is one of the priorities which should be accomplished comprehensively in order to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of the Council. Our delegation is of the view that the principles of democracy, accountability, equity and geographical balance should be the guiding philosophy in our endeavour to reform the Council, which we believe needs to happen with the broadest possible agreement.

The Council's membership and working methods need substantive revision. However, if there are difficulties in reaching an understanding about Council enlargement, that should not prevent us from trying to make progress in the discussion on improving the Council's working methods. We view comprehensive reform of the Security Council as an integral aspect of the overall United Nations reform process.

In that connection, we would like to thank Ambassador Frank Majoor of the Netherlands and Ambassador Paulette Bethel of the Bahamas for serving as Vice-Chairpersons of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. The responsibility is now on all of us to rise above our differences and work constructively to achieve positive results for the greater good of humanity. The stakes have never been higher.

The Council can be effective in the exercise of its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security only if it is perceived as fair and as representing the interests of the global public. Therefore, a true democratic approach, transparency and an equitable geographical composition would help the Council to perform its tasks with greater credibility and impact. Indonesia is open to considering various proposals on Council reform, including reform of its membership and its working methods, so long as the fundamental principles outlined earlier are followed.

Our view remains that the Security Council should increase the number of open meetings at which the views of Member States are taken into consideration as input into the work of the Council, rather than as reactions soon after the adoption of a resolution. The Council's transparency would also increase further if its debates — which sometimes are held without having been scheduled or with selective notification — were convened in a more open manner.

We welcome the Security Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, under the able chairmanship of Japan, which has been successful in formulating changes to the Council's working methods, as set out in document S/2006/507. We consider the Informal

Working Group to be a complementary contribution to improving the Council's working methods.

We believe that there is a need to hold more frequent and regular meetings with the troop-contributing countries, whose peacekeepers face the ultimate risks in the maintenance of peace and have a unique perspective regarding the situation on the ground. The decision-making of the Security Council would improve further if it invited regular appraisals by the countries sending troops.

The General Assembly, as a truly encompassing platform, must continue to play its due role in international affairs. There may be a need for it to do more, particularly when the Security Council fails to take action. There is also a need for the Council to interact more closely and substantively with other United Nations organs, including the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. However, it should refrain from an expanded interpretation of international peace and security.

Indonesia looks forward to playing an active role in the Security Council when it assumes its non-permanent membership in January 2007. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Member States for giving us their support and trust. We reaffirm to all Member States our full support in furthering the role of the United Nations to help build a safe and prosperous world for all of our peoples.

Mr. Anzola Quinto (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. We thank the representative of the State of Qatar for introducing the report of the Security Council (A/61/2).

We note that the report continues to be merely descriptive. It is a chronological compendium of meetings and documents, which does not make it possible to assess the achievements, progress and complexities of the Council's work. We hope that the Council will be able to submit a more analytical report that will contribute to the understanding of the way in which it addressed the various items on its agenda, the way in which it arrived at its decisions and the reasons why it did not consider particular matters. Nonetheless, the report reveals the constant increase in the volume and scope of the Council's activities.

Once again, Africa occupies a prominent place in its programme of work, as does the situation in the Middle East. With regard to Africa, Venezuela believes that the issues of peace and security are interdependent with and inseparable from those of development and social justice. We are convinced that conflicts must be addressed in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, taking into account not only the security dimension, but also other variables.

We are concerned to see that underlying economic, social and political conditions that aggravate or create conflicts remain unchanged when an armed conflict appears to be headed towards a solution. That is why international cooperation to deal with the economic and social problems of the African continent must be sustained. There must be supportive and sustained cooperation, not handouts, to help meet the urgent needs of citizens in the areas of health, education and employment, in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals.

Peacekeeping operations are certainly a valuable means of helping to resolve conflicts. However, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, such operations should be deployed on the basis of the requirements essential for their proper functioning, such as the consent of the parties involved in the conflict, impartiality in carrying out their mandates and the non-use of force except in self-defence. Such operations cannot assume the functions of a peace-imposition force; their activities must abide strictly by the purposes and principles of the Charter, including full respect for national sovereignty, non-intervention in States' internal affairs and the self-determination of peoples.

Unfortunately, in recent years, peacekeeping missions have carried out tasks that go beyond their nature by assuming reconstruction functions. Such activities are the responsibility of the authorities and peoples affected. Moreover, there have been increasing reports of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by personnel of such missions. The Council must take all of that into account when it decides on and reviews the mandates of peacekeeping missions.

Venezuela firmly supports all resolutions reaffirming the principles that should form the basis for a peaceful and equitable settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — a settlement that will lead to a stable and lasting peace in the Middle East region. In

that connection, we believe that the full realization of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people is essential. My country continues to wonder why the Palestinians are paying for crimes of Nazi barbarism.

Last August, the Security Council adopted, with curious urgency, two resolutions aimed at preventing alleged potential threats to international peace and security but took four weeks to take action on the real and grave situation in Lebanon. Those four weeks made it possible — with astonishing Council inaction — to carry out a slaughter of civilians and to destroy installations, infrastructure and other targets, including civilian targets. More recently, we again witnessed Council inaction in the face of new violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, as in the 8 November massacre at Beit Hanoun. Faced by this inaction by the Council — owing to the veto of one of its permanent members — the General Assembly had to shoulder its responsibilities in the area of international peace and security by resuming its tenth emergency special session to address the issue and to take measures in that regard.

The Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. However, if, for one reason or another, it does not assume its responsibility in due course, the General Assembly must act with the necessary urgency, in accordance with the authority given it by the Charter. We would thus be contributing, under unfortunate circumstances, to the democratization of the United Nations.

The maintenance of international peace and security is based on the premise that relations among States, irrespective of their ideological, cultural or political differences, should be governed by strict compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter and respect for international law. We reject the use of violence as a means of settling conflicts.

Self-defence and proportionality are not legally dissociable concepts. The first is a justification, and the second is an element of the former. There can be no self-defence without proportionality, because, if excesses are committed in the context of defensive action, then the use of force ceases to be legitimate and becomes aggression dissociated from any prior occurrence.

Venezuela is also particularly interested in the situation of the sisterly Republic of Haiti. We recognize the progress made as a result of the elections held on the island and the contribution that this process has made to bringing peace to that Caribbean country. We are happy to see that the Haitian people, given the opportunity to do so, have once again chosen the path of democracy and social justice. We believe that to achieve the stabilization of the Haitian political situation, it is important to ensure the economic and social development of the Haitian people. For that reason, we are carrying out cooperation programmes with Haiti in consultation with its authorities.

My country attaches particular importance to reform of the United Nations, a process that is necessary given the urgent need to democratize the Organization. In that context, we support the speedy reform of the Security Council as an essential part of the overall reform process, so as to make more representative of the international community and of current geopolitical realities, and giving it a greater sense of legitimacy and democracy, as set out in the Millennium Declaration.

Venezuela wishes to reiterate that the membership of the Security Council should be expanded in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, so as to achieve greater and better representation on the part of the developing countries. However, Security Council reform should not be limited to an increase in its membership. It is important also to deal with other issues such as its agenda, its working methods and its decision-making process.

The Security Council must improve its working methods to increase participation by States that are non-members of the Council, enhance its accountability and increase the transparency of its work. Private meetings should be held only when absolutely necessary, and more public and open debates should be convened so that the views and contributions of non-member States can be heard. It has become customary for Council members to take decisions immediately following the statements made by non-member States. However, the Council should first hear those views, then hold consultations to take account of what it has heard, and only then should decisions be taken.

The Council should focus its agenda on problems that truly relate to threats to international peace and security and should avoid addressing questions that could represent an encroachment on the competences of other United Nations bodies. In that connection, any decision by the Council to hold formal or informal debates on the situation of a particular State Member of the United Nations or on any question that does not represent a threat to international peace and security is in violation of Article 24 of the Charter. Moreover, the Council should invoke Chapter VII of the Charter only as a last resort and should not turn to it for items that do not necessarily represent an immediate threat to international peace and security.

Moreover, the indiscriminate use of sanctions has had an adverse impact on the peoples of the countries on which such sanctions are imposed and has negatively affected the human rights of their citizens. Sanctions should be imposed as a last resort in a limited number of situations, once diplomatic means have been exhausted, and they should be lifted once their objectives have been achieved. We are concerned at the fact that on occasion the Council has, under pressure, adopted sanctions in situations that do not necessarily represent a threat to international peace and security and has resorted to the provisions of Articles 41 and 42 of the Charter in a premature manner, without having exhausted the measures at its disposal for the peaceful settlement of disputes. That trend must be reversed if the legitimacy of the Security Council is to be strengthened.

Venezuela believes that in the process of democratizing the United Nations, the veto must be eliminated. Until the ultimate objective of eliminating the veto is achieved, formulas must be devised to limit and minimize its use, including mechanisms whereby the use of the veto can be avoided. It is unacceptable that opposition by only one State Member out of 192 can prevent the United Nations from taking action on issues that have a bearing on the maintenance of international peace and security, as has occurred with respect to the situation in the Middle East, particularly concerning recent attacks by Israeli soldiers against Palestine and Lebanon.

Venezuela would like to see the Security Council exercise its responsibility to achieve effective solutions to international conflicts by ensuring respect for international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, with a view to achieving peace, which is the fundamental objective of the Organization and of the international community, on the basis of social justice and democracy.

Mr. Spatafora (Italy): I would like to join the others who spoke before me in thanking Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser of Qatar, the Security Council's current President, for presenting the report of the Security Council. For my delegation, which will assume its functions as an elected member of the Council next month, this report is indeed food for thought.

I would like to thank you, Madam President, for offering us the opportunity of this debate on Security Council reform, a debate which, as rightly pointed out in your letter dated 1 December, should be inspired by a fresh and open-minded approach.

Along those same lines, you yourself, Madam President, said yesterday that

> "the time has come for us to make a realistic assessment of the whole issue. In so doing, we should be prepared to look at this matter with fresh and open minds so that we can make substantial progress." (*See A/61/PV.72*)

I would like to express here my gratitude to the co-Chairpersons of the Open-ended Working Group, Ambassador Bethel of the Bahamas and Ambassador Majoor of the Netherlands, for the outstanding contribution that they have made, on which we will have to build.

Madam President, I am convinced that if we want to finally achieve results after decades of debates, we should indeed try to take, as you have said, an innovative and fresh approach in building on the common ground of what is of fundamental importance for all the membership. There is certainly a great deal of common ground, if we look at the expectations of the membership — and we have heard about this yesterday and today — of greater representativity, so as to bring about a different and more equitable balance of power, greater ownership, greater transparency, greater accountability, more appropriate working methods, more efficiency and effectiveness, more regional empowerment, and so on.

This debate and its follow-up should hopefully provide you, Madam President, with some useful creative input and some conceptual and political building blocks that will allow us, in the months — not years — ahead, to finally engage, under your guidance,

with pragmatism and creativity, in successful negotiations towards a reform of the Security Council that will be non-divisive and therefore will not weaken the Organization because it will be supported by the widest possible agreement within the membership. There should be no winners and losers. All should feel that they are on board. No one should feel that they are being left out. All should feel comfortable.

There can be no doubt that we need and want an early Security Council reform, as was highlighted by our leaders at the 2005 Summit.

But there is also no doubt that what we need and want is a good reform. We cannot take a risk. It has to be clear to all of us that in this kind of exercise there are no rehearsals. We cannot afford the luxury of a gamble. We need, as I said, a good reform. And reform will be good if it improves on what we have today. Reform will be good — and this will be the main benchmark — if it strengthens ownership by the membership, bearing in mind, by the way, the fact that small States make up more than half of the membership and that the Security Council, according to the Charter, is supposed to act on their behalf too, as was recalled by many who spoke here yesterday.

Ownership by the membership should be ownership in defining the composition of the Council, ownership of its proceedings and ownership of its outcomes. That is why we need reform of the Security Council to be comprehensive in both clusters: enlargement and working methods. On the latter aspect, let me just recall the point so forcefully and rightly made yesterday by the Permanent Representatives of Switzerland, Ambassador Maurer, and of Liechtenstein, Ambassador Wenaweser. Let me also recall the importance of the Security Council Working Group on procedure, led by our colleague from Japan. We must continue to build on that.

If we succeed in addressing, through reform, the ownership deficit — and that is the point; there is an ownership deficit — then the result will be a strengthening of the credibility, efficiency and effectiveness of the Council. We will have more implementation, more concrete results and more achievements. The problem today is that Member States feel that they are being marginalized — we are being marginalized. They feel that they do not have a real say, and that brings frustration, demotivation, disengagement and reluctance to commit and comply. Member States do not feel that they are on board. As you, Madam, said in the opening statement of your presidency, the United Nations is "an Organization of hope that is based on commitment, consensus and coexistence" (*A/61/PV.1, p. 3*). That is precisely what it is all about.

The reality of today is that the feelings and perceptions of being "out of business" are undermining the very foundations of the United Nations system. Let us address those feeling and perceptions before it is too late.

How do we proceed from here? First, I feel that we should not allow the current favourable momentum for reform to fade. There is, I feel, a window of opportunity that we should not allow to close. It is a window of opportunity that was highlighted and brought to the attention of the entire membership during an event on 20 September hosted by President Musharraf and President Prodi — an event that you, Madam, honoured with your presence. "Fresh"; "innovative"; "results-oriented approach"; "open mind": those were the key words of the event.

Of course, as has rightly been made clear by the Permanent Representative of Brazil, Ambassador Ronaldo Sardenberg, we should avoid starting from scratch. In fact, the results of previous debates offer us important starting points for this last mile of the process — always the most difficult one. I am referring, in particular, to what the Open-ended Working Group managed to achieve during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, after three formal meetings and nine sessions of informal consultations — that is, the set of elements included in annex IV of the report contained in document A/58/47. Those elements could certainly offer us a useful platform to guide our new efforts in exploring the various options with — in the words of President Musharraf — "political flexibility and diplomatic creativity".

Secondly, in embarking on this new and innovative path we should avoid making what I believe would be the mistake of first working out, within each grouping, the more or less new model of our choice, and only then engage in negotiations. I think, and I feel, that it would be much better, and would more easily pave the way towards a successful outcome, if all of us engaged in the early stages of the process, trying together to build the various components of

what could be a viable new model of reform. It is, I feel, much easier — even if difficult — to build together a new car in one factory than it is to negotiate a possible agreement in the choice and/or the mixing of different models of cars that are already being built, each in a different factory.

Thirdly, in order to facilitate such a process, in order to spark innovative and creative thinking, we will need a proper, conducive environment — an environment that, at the beginning of the process, should be as informal as possible so as to make everybody feel comfortable and enable them to dare to come up with new ideas. Our challenge is to allow such new ideas to emerge and compete, without fear of committing our Governments at this early stage. In fact, a lot of ideas are floating around, and I am sure that you, Madam, are well aware of their existence. Among these new ideas, let me just mention, as an example — and I am purposely taking this from outside the Uniting for Consensus basket — the ideas that have been floated by the Permanent Representative of Cyprus, Ambassador Andreas Mavroyiannis, in his personal capacity. I think that we cannot afford the luxury of not discussing and working on such ideas and their potential added value before they either get lost in the process or become too rigid.

A few minutes ago our Indian colleague, Nirupam Sen, made a statement that was, as always, very brilliant, provocative and creative. He presented a tabula rasa of practically everything, and that is good — I always try to focus on the positive — because it means that we can build. Sometimes, as we know, it is much easier to build anew on bare ground than it is to adapt an old house to make it look nicer. He also said, among many other things, that we should first identify the problems that we want to address and then consider what remedies we are envisaging for addressing them. I think that those are very good criteria, which should guide us in our consultations. The point is that Ambassador Sen may be right in saying that all of the talk about rotation and elections and long duration is rubbish. But let us set those ideas against the problems that we have to address. Then perhaps we will conclude, and not merely say, that they are, in fact, inadequate. If I remember rightly, it was Ambassador Wenaweser who, speaking yesterday, said that at a certain point it is a question of religion, of belief. So if we get stuck at a certain point, it will then be up to us and our willingness to achieve a breakthrough, to go beyond our religious or ideological beliefs and make progress, even if we travel perhaps just two, three or four miles.

We have to shake the tree, but to do that, we have to have the proper setting. I do not think that this is the proper setting, at this stage, because here we are committed to the positions of our Governments, whereas we have to think freely. Maybe we can do it in this House, in the context of proper consultations, formal or informal, within the Open-ended Working Group or in any other format, provided the process is transparent, inclusive and open to all.

However, it might be more fruitful, at this early stage of harvesting, to hold brainstorming sessions — "pre-consultations", if you will — outside this House, with events that would, of course, be open to all of the membership. I have already explored this possibility with Columbia University and the United Nations Foundation. I do not foresee any major problem if the membership — that is, all of us and you, Madam President — wishes to go along with this idea and explore this path. Personally, I am in favour of it, because of its complete informality, transparency and inclusiveness.

On a final note, I would like to recall what Secretary-General Kofi Annan told us once again just a few days ago, that the two options before us at this stage are very clear. Either we choose to go on, year after year, fighting for the reform we believe is the best one for our national interests, or we choose a more pragmatic and incremental approach, and, without giving up our preferred ultimate model, we opt for a realistic type of reform that would be non-divisive and therefore politically viable and able to garner the support of the membership at large — a reform that, being non-divisive, will certainly benefit the Organization. Let us work out which is our preferred option.

Mr. Briz Gutiérrez (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I wish to endorse the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Cuba, who spoke in this debate on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. We would like to supplement his statement with a few additional thoughts on these two items, which are of great importance, and to reiterate our position thereon.

Secondly, I wish to thank Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, Permanent Representative of the

State of Qatar, for his introduction, in his capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of December, of the annual report of the Security Council.

While there is a clear connection between the two items that we are discussing today jointly, we would like to reiterate our belief that the report of the Security Council is sufficiently important to merit consideration on its own, particularly at this time, when we are seeking new ways of enhancing the effectiveness of the principal organs of our Organization.

Consideration of the annual report of the Security Council by the General Assembly is a good opportunity for a large number of Members of the Organization to evaluate the work and performance of the Council during the period under consideration, in accordance with Articles 15 and 24 of the Charter of the United Nations. Those articles stipulate that the General Assembly shall receive and consider annual and special reports from the Security Council and that these reports shall include an account of the measures that the Council has decided to implement to maintain international peace and security.

Moreover, the report of the Council provides all Member States with an opportunity to assess the ever-broader work of the Council in dealing with the various international issues within its competence. Accordingly, those States that are not members of the Council should consider carefully ways of enhancing its efficiency and effectiveness.

Thus the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly should be more than a symbolic or ritual undertaking. It should be a substantive document, not a mere formality. It is not enough, in other words, that it have only the minimum characteristics necessary for it to be called a report. Indeed, it is only a sketchy outline that lacks any details concerning the votes taken. The report should be the principal nexus between the two bodies. Above all, given the close relationship between the maintenance of peace and all the other functions performed by the United Nations, the report should be a working instrument that enables the General Assembly to play its role as the principal deliberative and policy-making organ of the United Nations.

Guatemala appreciates the efforts made to improve significantly the key features of the document. However, the report is still primarily a descriptive, routine compilation of documents, focusing on a chronological account of what the Council does and what takes place at its public meetings. Unfortunately, it does not include any assessment of the difficulties, the progress, the setbacks, the obstacles and the challenges that occurred in the context of the efforts made by the Council to resolve conflicts that threaten international peace and security.

Moreover, this year once again we must deplore the fact that the report was submitted to us just a few days before this important debate, which does not contribute to producing the real analysis and evaluation we had hoped for.

My delegation has noted that the Council has dealt with a broad range of issues during the period under consideration, which reaffirms the trend of recent years whereby the volume and scope of the activities of the Council have increased. A total of 257 meetings were held, 81 resolutions were adopted, and 65 presidential statements were issued. That in and of itself means that it is particularly important that there be transparency in the Council's procedures. Taking into account the far-reaching consequences of the Council's decisions, Members must know which decisions are being taken by the Council and why. While some improvements have taken place with the passage of time, very few practical and effective mechanisms have been adopted for interaction with the Council on key issues.

On the other hand, we welcome the trend towards an increased number of public meetings, and we are pleased that this is becoming strengthened. We welcome the growing practice of sending missions to the field, such as the one sent to Central Africa and to Ethiopia and Eritrea in November 2005, and the one to the Sudan and Chad in June 2006. We believe that this is a way of understanding the actual situation in its true context and dimensions by obtaining clear information directly. This makes it possible to take better decisions and to find appropriate solutions to each situation.

Moreover, we share the view that the holding of thematic debates is useful in enhancing the effectiveness of the Council. Guatemala has participated actively in such public thematic discussions because we believe that they are a way for members of the Council and Members of the United Nations in general to express their views and make suggestions on matters directly related to the work of the Council. However, it is still not clear whether the Council takes fully into account those views when it takes its decisions.

As mentioned earlier, my delegation has witnessed a gradual increase in both the volume and the scope of the work of the Security Council. In that connection, we share the growing concern as to the gradual encroachment of the Security Council on the competence of the General Assembly. Over time, a trend has emerged whereby the Security Council holds debates on questions that traditionally are considered by other United Nations bodies. Thematic debates can be useful only if they are directly related to the mandate of the Council.

My delegation values in particular the work done by the Council on matters directly related to its mandate. It is vital, however, that its members act in strict compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter and resist any attempt to address questions that do not pose a real threat to international or regional peace and security.

With regard to equitable representation on the Council, we join in the call that we get beyond the impasse in the discussions on reform. The parameters of the debate are well known. Historically, we have spoken in favour of a moderate increase in the non-permanent membership, but more recently we have indicated that we could live with any formula that enjoys consensus.

Guatemala is firmly committed to the process of United Nations reform as set forth in the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) and in the 2005 Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1). The question of reform of the United Nations system has been one of those which have generated the most debate in recent months in this Assembly. However, we still do not see any significant progress with regard to the reform of the Security Council. We acknowledge the timid steps taken on some points presented at the time through the initiative of the group of five small nations — the "Small Five" (S-5).

We view Security Council reform as a necessary element but always connected to a broader process: reform of the Organization. A collective security system necessarily requires the integrated strengthening of multilateralism and of the United Nations. Therefore, we continue to maintain that Council reform should not be focused only on the question of increasing the membership, but should also deal in an integrated way with the review of the working methods and the decision-making process. I wish to reiterate my delegation's belief in the need for the Security Council to be more legitimate, to have greater transparency and to be more effective to cope with the challenges facing the international community today.

Guatemala favours the continued open and accessible functioning of the Council, with a view to greater transparency, so that, in accordance with the Charter, it may truly act on behalf of Member States and thus in the interest of the international community, with the constant valuable contribution of all interested States. We support the idea of a strengthened approach to improved coordination among the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, so as to guarantee continuity in the work of the Organization, with a view to ensuring the maintenance and strengthening of peace, safeguarding the particular responsibilities and powers of each United Nations organ, in accordance with the Charter.

Lastly, Guatemala reaffirms its commitment to participate actively in future discussions on this question.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I address this Assembly a few hours after the death of the person who governed Chile during a long and dark period of my country. A sad chapter in Chile's history has thus come to a close, so that we can, from this point on, look towards the future.

It is precisely the future that brings us here today. Chile has been an determined participant in an in-depth reform of the United Nations which would reaffirm the principles and values of its Charter and thus increase its legitimacy. That is why we should not continue deferring the challenge of reforming the Security Council and should focus not only on the necessary expansion of this body, but also on improving its methods of work.

For this reason, Chile reaffirms what was said by Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and also the recommendation in paragraph 154 of the 2005 Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1), that the

> "Security Council [should] continue to adapt its working methods so as to increase the involvement of States not members of the Council in its work, as appropriate, enhance its

accountability to the membership and increase the transparency of its work".

Similarly, our country seeks a renewal of the Security Council that would make it more representative, transparent and effective. We need a more democratic and efficient Security Council in order to strengthen its credibility.

Chile once again reaffirms its support for the aspiration of Brazil and other countries to occupy permanent seats in a reformed Security Council, while maintaining its historical opposition to the veto. That is consistent with the fundamental value we attach to the principle of the legal equality of States and the democratization of international organizations. Thus, ever since the establishment of the United Nations, and throughout the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, my country has maintained its opposition to the veto.

Chile will always be ready to contribute to the building of consensus necessary to a comprehensive reform of the Organization, and of the Security Council in particular. Chile favours an effort of compromise and agreement, which is consistent with our policy in dealing with matters that divide us. The Organization can count on our commitment and support. We cannot lose the opportunity to change the present rigidity of the debate on the Security Council so that we can improve the Council and make it more democratic.

Mr. Lacroix (France) (*spoke in French*): Permit me first of all, Madam President, to welcome your initiative in convening this meeting today for a joint debate on the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly and on the reform of the Security Council.

On the report (A/61/2) introduced this morning by the representative of Qatar as President of the Council, we think that this exercise is doubly important. First, it is important for the Security Council itself in that it enables it to evaluate the ground it has covered over the course of a year. But it is also — and particularly — important for the Member States at large, as an opportunity to enter into a genuine dialogue within the General Assembly on the way in which the Security Council has been discharging the mission conferred upon it by the Charter. Such a dialogue is essential and makes a most useful contribution to the work of the Council.

I turn now to Security Council reform. As members know, France is committed to comprehensive reform, with regard both to its composition and to its working methods. On the latter, its working methods, it must be said that real progress has been made this year. Thus, the presidential note (S/2006/507) adopted last July after several months of collective hard work made it possible to make progress on a certain number of specific subjects, although they have not yet all been addressed. Among them I would highlight increased transparency in the work of the Security Council and of its subsidiary bodies, the degree of consultation with States concerned in regional crises and the importance of involving regional organizations.

France believes, however, that reform of the United Nations and of the Security Council would be incomplete without expansion of the Council. Here, opposition to change is not an option. Given that the Council's Charter responsibilities demand that it intensify its activities, we must enhance its authority by adapting its composition to the realities of today's world. Expanding the Council's composition would also enable it to be more effective, because the implementation of its decisions requires increasing human, financial and logistical commitment on the part of the international community.

For its part, France continues to support the plan submitted last year by the Group of Four, which we believe is best able to meet the challenges, particularly through an expansion in both membership categories. In that context, we continue to fully support the aspirations of Germany, Japan, India and Brazil to become permanent members and Africa's demand to have its rightful place in such reform.

Last July's debate here in the General Assembly revealed a new readiness on the part of Member States to make progress on this issue. While we are aware of the continuing impasse in the negotiations, France is prepared to discuss with anyone at any time, transparently and openly, the crucial issue of Security Council reform.

Reform of the Security Council, given its responsibilities, is essential and urgent. The promoters of such reform know that they can always count on the active involvement of France.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.